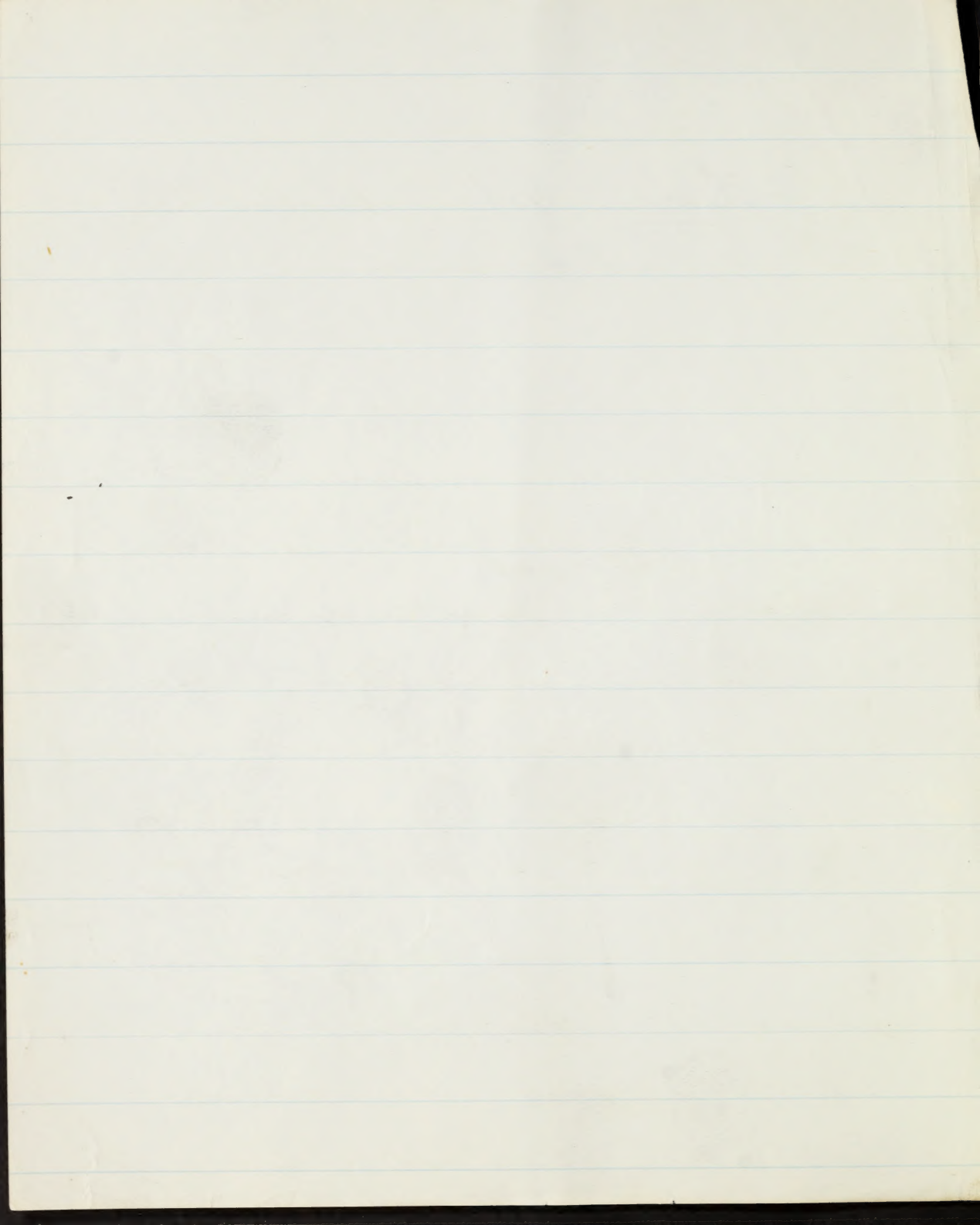


Hon. John Wells.

It seldom happens that one is able to read - after the lapse of some little time - the expressions of popular feeling called forth by the death of a man in public life, without being made painfully aware of an over-estimate placed upon his life and services. So groundless, as applied to this present time, is the complaint which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Mark

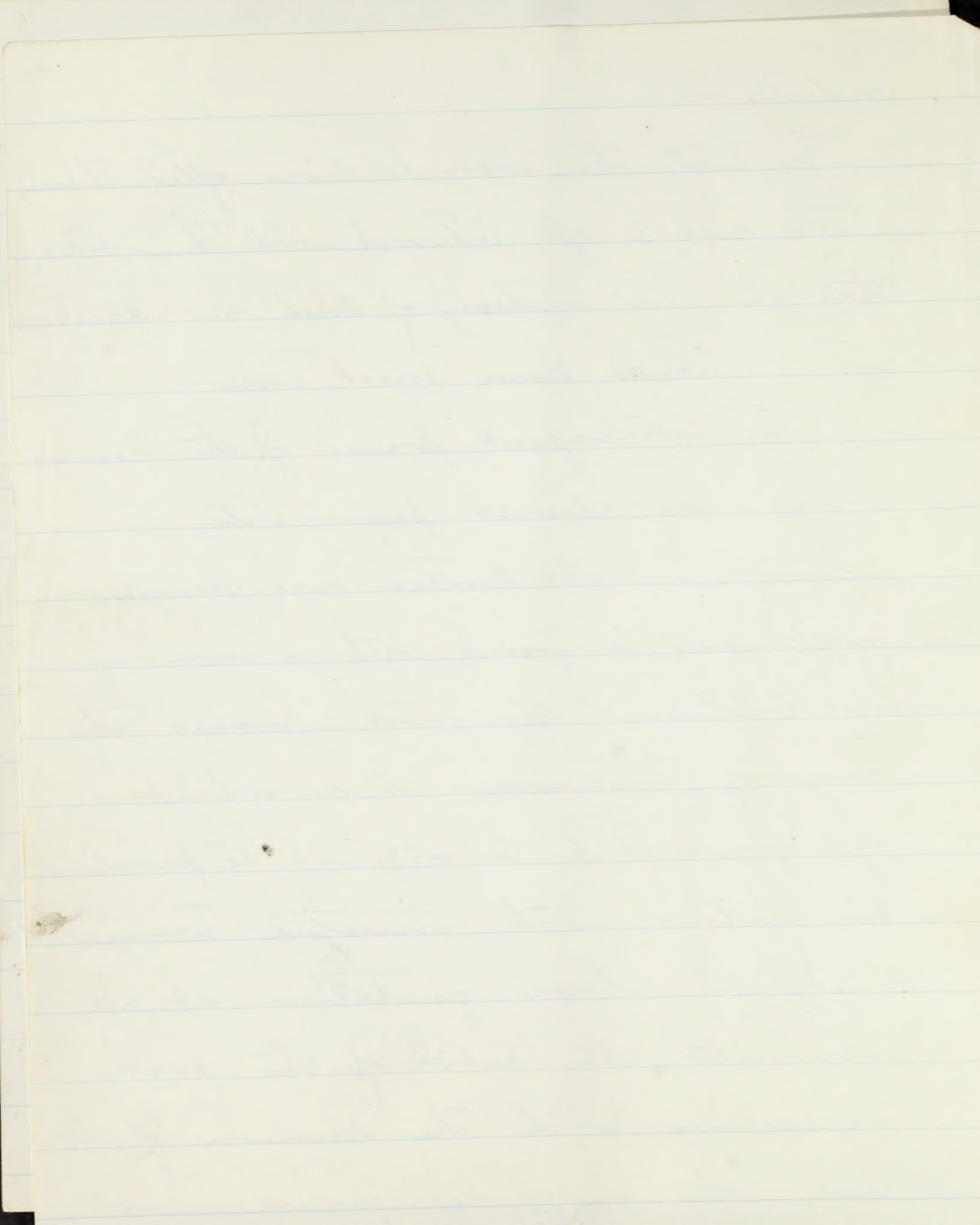


Antony, —

"The Evil that men do lives after them;
 "The good is oft interred with their bones;"
 that the very contrary of such an accusation would seem most true.

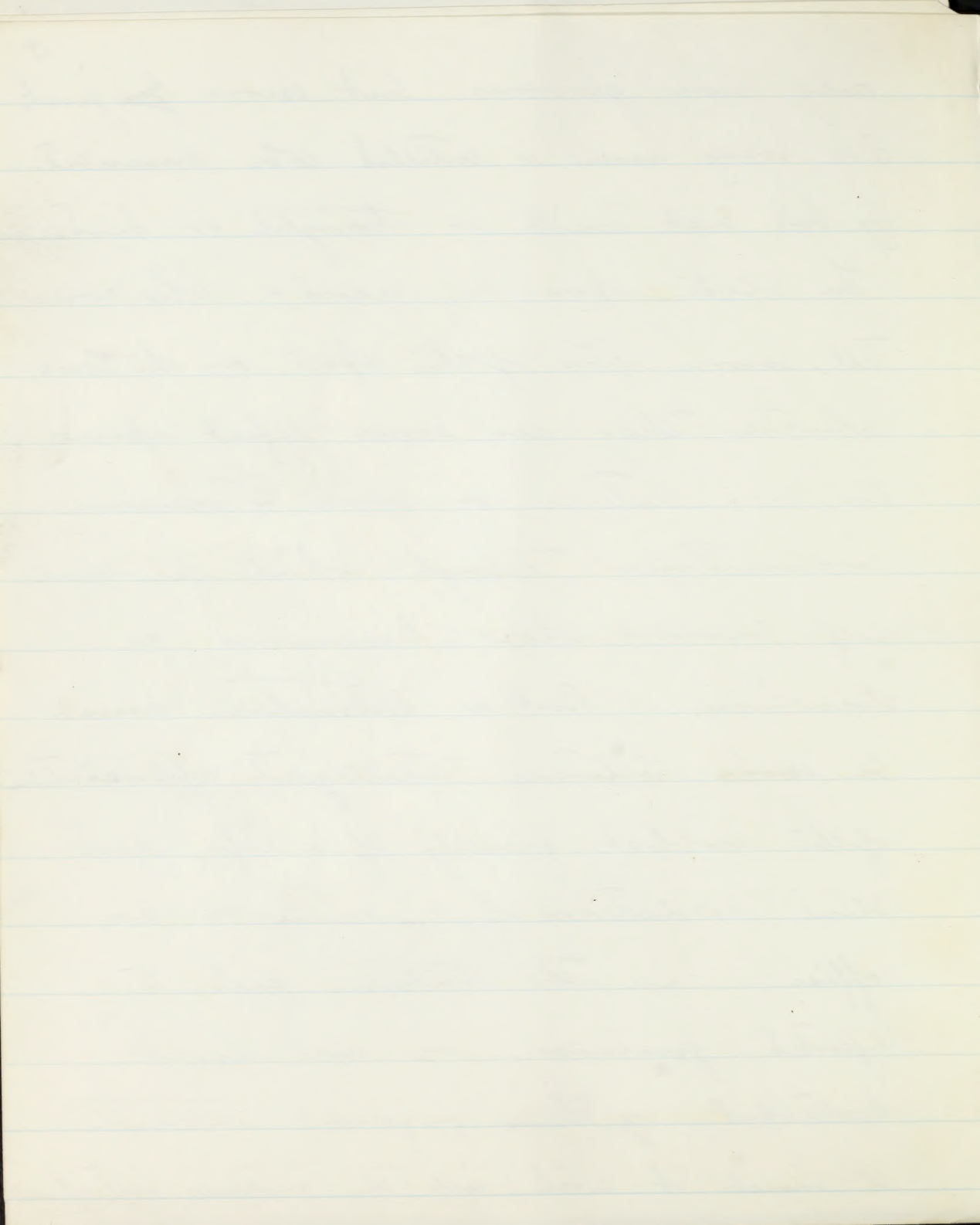
The extravagant praise of the funeral eulogy has almost passed into a proverb. No matter how much fault may be found with a man in his lifetime, his death hushes the voice of criticism to a whisper and friendship is allowed to proclaim his virtues with trumpet tongue.

If the above quotation at all represents the habit of the past in dealing with the memory of the dead, the world has grown — not



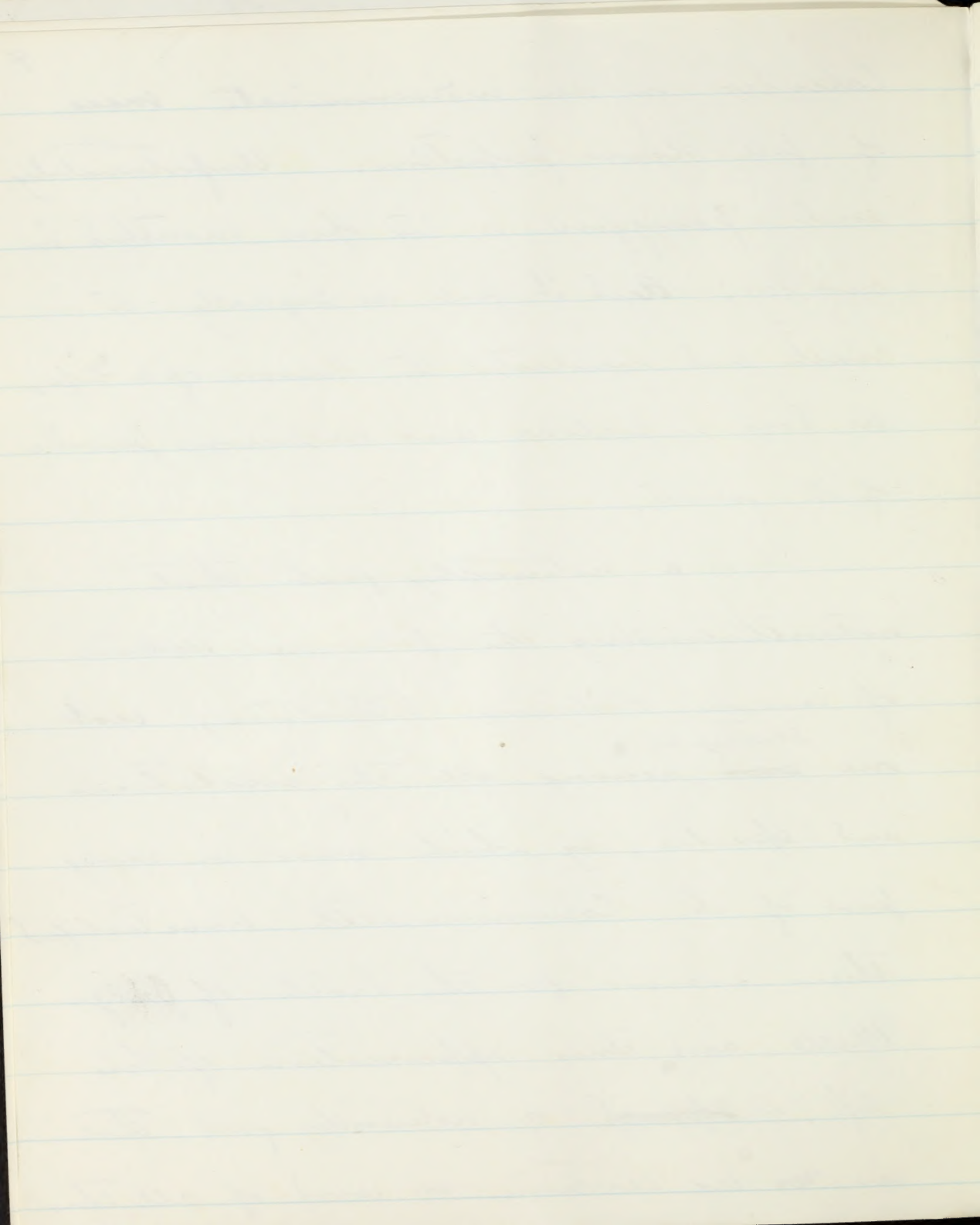
only more generous, but more ~~for~~ just.
For every man is entitled to be measured
by his best trait or thought or deed.

The blot upon his record; - who can
tell, more than of the spots on the Sun,
whether they are some defect upon
his very nature, or some extraneous
circumstance through which his real
self cannot show luminous as
elsewhere. But a distinction must
be made between intelligent appreciation
of the noblest quality of a life, and
blind adulation of a name or an
office. In the tributes paid to
supposed greatness, we are most
disturbed by their frequent attempt
to invest it with all the virtues in the



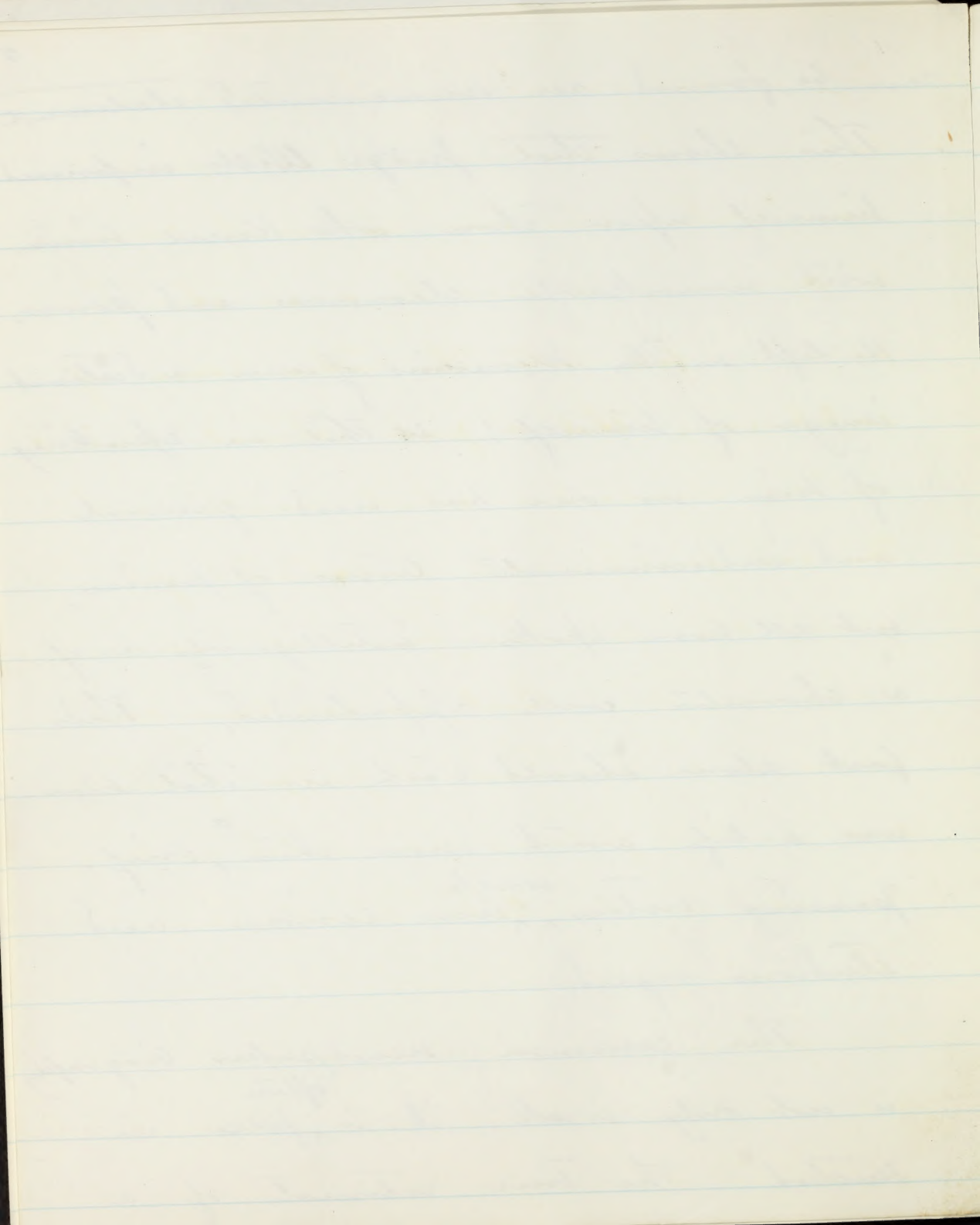
Calendar in an indiscriminate mass of full blown perfection. Unfortunately, such panegyric is too open mouthed in our day; And it fails as signally to reach and inculcate the lesson of a life, as does a jealous and malicious parade of its faults.

It is a noteworthy fact that notwithstanding the fulsome nature of much obituary literature, not one ^{sentence} ~~word~~, among all the resolutions and speeches, by which men in every part of the Commonwealth have testified their sorrow for the death of Judge Wells and their appreciation of his life, - ~~stands~~ a noteworthy fact that in ~~the~~ no sentence or word of all this



can be found an unwarranted statement. This shows that Judge Wells impressed himself upon those who knew him with remarkable clearness and power. He left in the memories of men a distinct image of himself; so that in speaking of him no one has used general and indiscriminate terms of praise, but all have spoken intelligently as of a character well apprehended. This fact alone should teach us that here was a life worth more than ^a brief, passing notice, ^{— worth} even serious and studious regard.

The common newspaper biography is not only weak, it is ^{often} false in method. The true estimate of a



life is not found in the balance
between its virtues and its faults.
Many writers who have too much conscience
to apotheosize a dead hero in stereotyped
phrases, fall into the other error of
supposing that a just estimate consists
in the remainder which results when
the bad qualities are sub~~str~~acted from the
good, the failures ^{of a life}, from its successful
achievements. But, as has been said,
no one is in position to judge of another
how far his failures are rooted in himself
and how far due ~~to~~ to circumstances.

The only judgement which we can feel
does justice to ourselves, and the only
one we are entitled to pass upon another,
is based upon the life's best fruit.



If a tree yields but one perfect pear,
 we know that that represents its
 capability. Under proper conditions of
 soil and temperature and light, it
 would produce all perfect pears. In
 summing up the various good and
 bad points of a character we only talk
 around and about it. But when
 we reach its most notable feature
 and find how the man came to be
that, we reach the heart and center
 of his character. There will be found
 to center whatever interest the man
 has awakened. If anywhere in him
 is a truth we need to learn or remember,
 it is to be found in his noblest
 quality and how he attained to it.



It is needless to say that no man could find in Judge Wells any faults to catalogue. Doubtless he was human and therefore far from being perfect at every point. But tried by any recognized standard or model not even slouder could find ^{in him} any discrepancy to cavil at. As far as human vision goes, and without pretending to declare the judgements of the Infinite, we may safely say that his character was so wonderfully near perfection as puts it out of our power to ~~say~~ particularize where we would have had it different.

But neither will there be here any attempt to rehearse the list of his virtues. The true method of finding



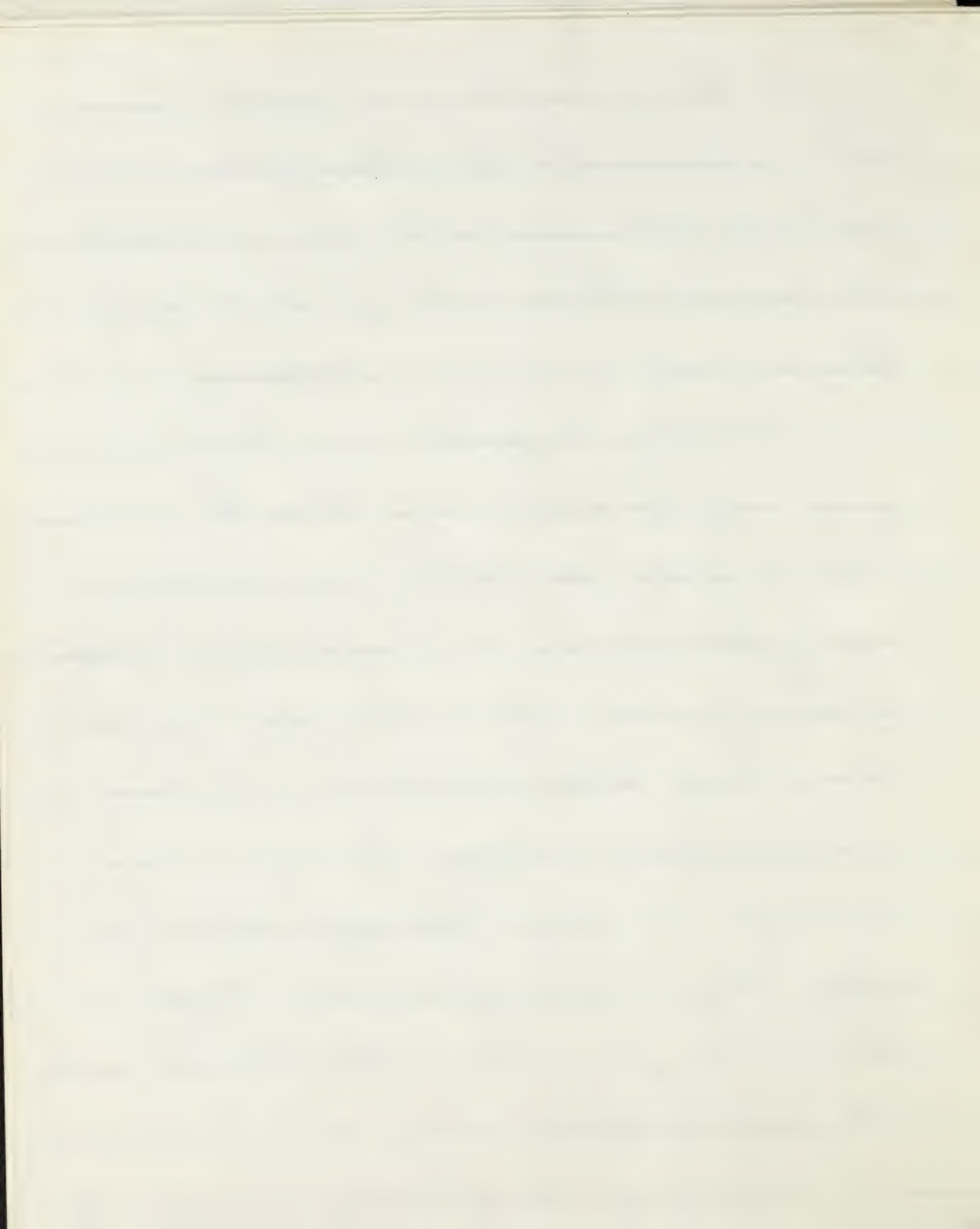
the lesson of Judge Wells' life will be what in him ^{it} ~~was~~ ^{was} to seek, ~~to~~ ^{is} supremely characteristic.

As man is partly the Architect of his own fortunes, and partly the creature of a fate which swells in the civilization out of which he ^{is} ~~has~~ ~~springing~~ ^{derived} his life illustrates the action of two forces, viz. & his own will and that indefinite something called the Spirit of the Age to which he belongs. The biographies of prominent individuals ^{have} ~~are~~ therefore a double interest. They are of value as showing the power of individual purpose to make circumstances tributary to itself, and as specimen results of the social influences which stimulate and direct the development of character.



There was never a more genuine son of Massachusetts than John Wells, and not often one who better exemplifies the highest attainments of New England thought and culture. ~~Probably~~

Probably no people ever lived a more self-conscious life than the Puritans. That is to say, no people ever endeavored more strenuously or constantly to shape, by force of will, their every day life into consistency with an ideal. Perhaps nothing of the Puritan character has survived in more strongly marked degree than this habit of mind. Our Ancestors, to whom the church and the school-house were as indispensable as their own habitations, created a

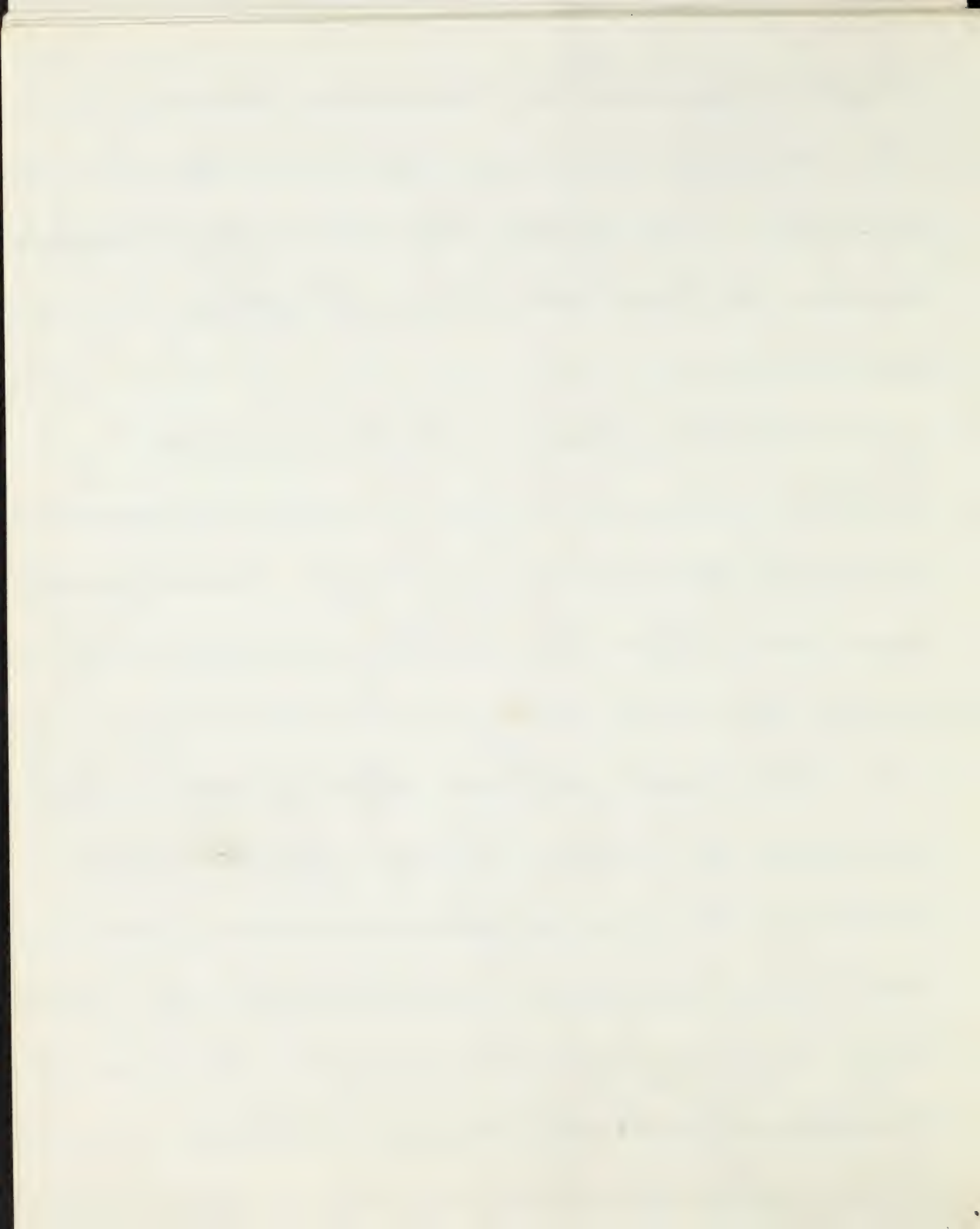


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mental atmosphere which stimulated
earnest serious endeavor to attain
an ideal knowledge and righteousness.
To this day, if New England men and
women have any distinctive character,
it is that they depend less than the
majority of ~~their fellow~~^{other peoples} upon outward
circumstances, and more resolutely than
they take their lives into their own
hands to guide according to their own
best judgment. In this respect
Judge Wells led a representative life;
for those familiar with his earlier
years say that in his youth he
proposed to himself a very high moral
standard, to which, through every change
and in every station, he made it his



first business to conform himself. Those who knew him later in life do not need to be told that the voice of conscience became within him the voice of supreme command.

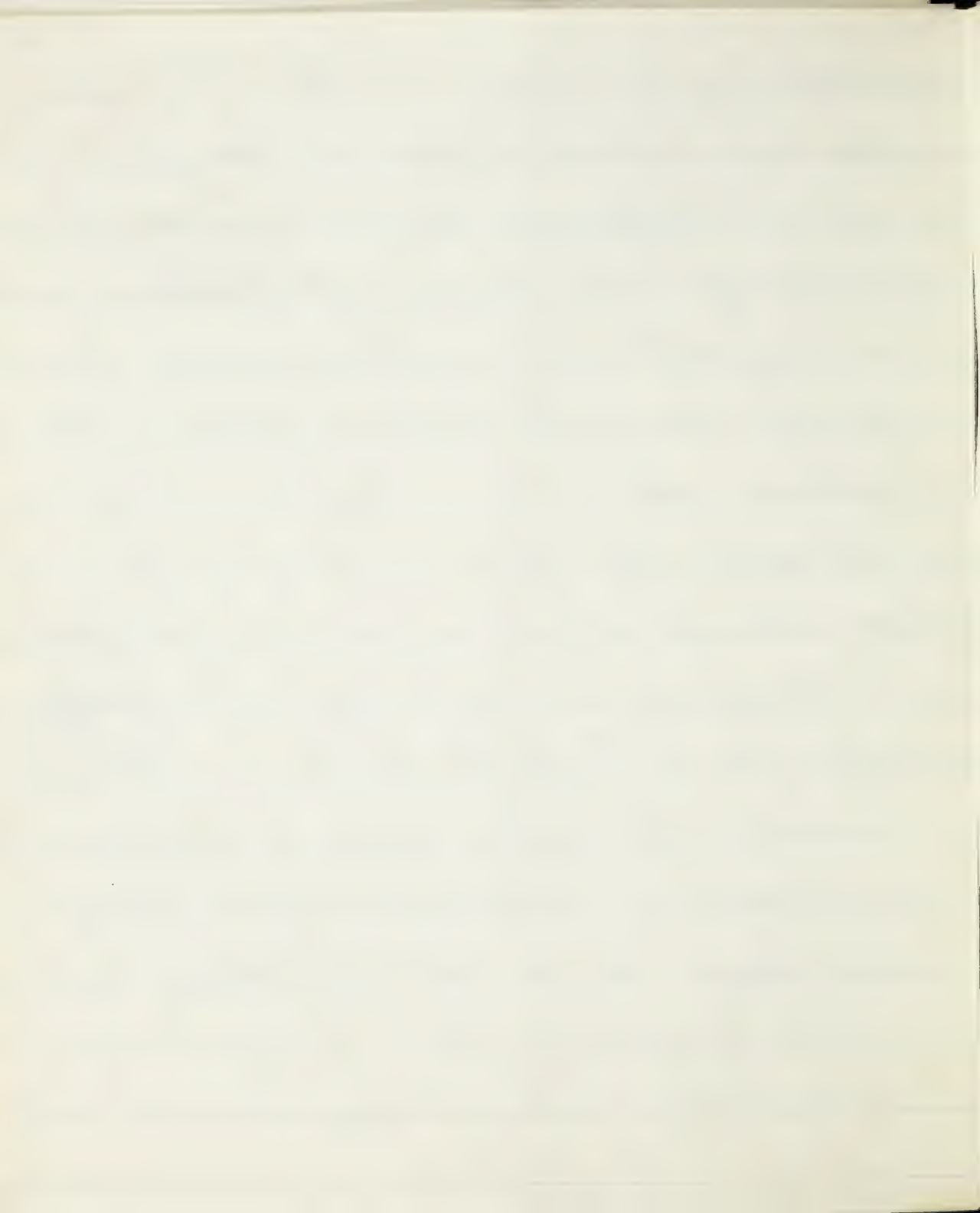
Now the New England Shibboleth - "Culture" - is to many minds suggestive of a very formal, icy, stiff-necked and pharisaic character. There can be no doubt that the ~~st~~ self-consciousness resulting from intense effort toward self-training is often, temporarily, a very unlovely and uncomfortable frame of mind. One can have few more dreadful experiences than to pass some time with a family to whom wealth or social position is new. All the wires by which the



household is managed are so painfully
 apparent; there is so much of assumed
 mannerism, such evident nervousness
 lest something may be done amiss;
 there is, in a word, so little of either
 uncounted freedom or polished ease that
 the visitor is made to feel like a
 condemned prisoner. So when a people
 puts itself into severe training for some
 higher excellence, most of the unconscious
 grace of childhood, most of the heartiness
 and spontaneity, the romance and poetry
 of idler living separt from it. It
 is apt to become egotistic, pretentious, uncounted,
 reserved, ascetic; superstitious in its
 observance of formal rules of conduct,
 intolerant of innocent amusements, and

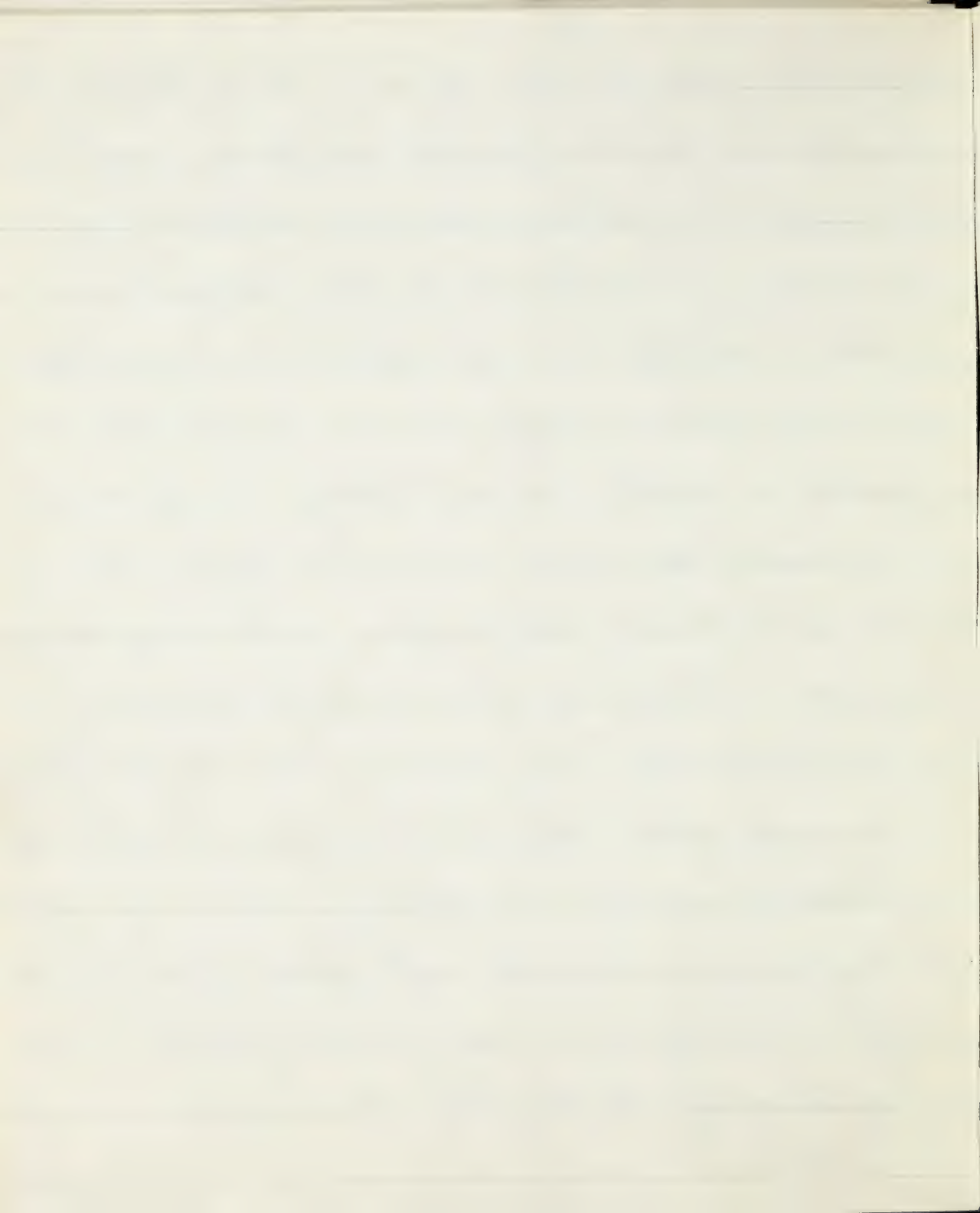


praternaturally solemn. These traits, in various milder or harsher shades, have been standing accusations against the people of New England. A tradition, not entirely without foundation in fact, has carried abroad this picture of them. If culture ends in the production of this stamp of character, if it must be maintained as well as won by constant watchfulness and consciousness of self, then it is a grave question whether culture adds to the sum of human enjoyments. But no process should be judged at a half-way stage, and, as representing the civilization in which he lived, the great feature in the life of Judge Wells is its promise



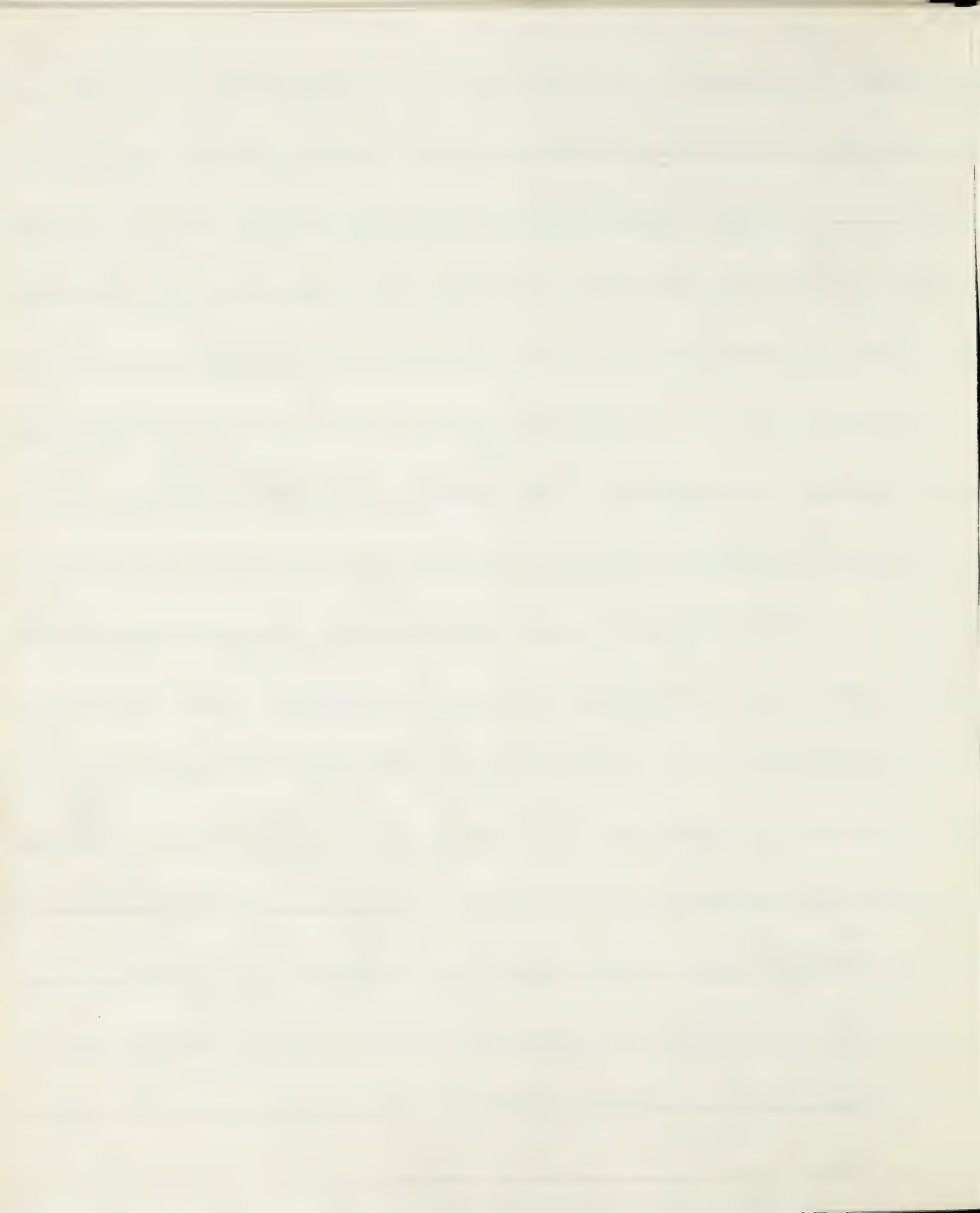
that the full results of our New England methods reach again the grace and beauty of unconscious, or spontaneous living. I never met that man, in whose thought self appeared to occupy a less prominent place. What he was, or what he was doing could never be made ~~the~~ even briefly the topic of conversation with him, except by persistent effort. Anything like a boast of his achievements, any token that he prided himself upon the position he had won, I think never crossed his lips. - A self-made man, he did not take that delight in alluding to the fact which sickens one of so many public characters.

I never met a man in whom Modesty



was a more genuine, unaffected trait. He was modest even to the very verge of bashfulness. I have been told that when a young man he suffered from his shrinking to enter society, and only by an effort of will ever prevailed upon himself to take a position subjecting him to public notice.

His heart was full of generous and kindly influences, flowing out toward those from whom he could expect no return for a kindness. If there were any doubt whether he was altogether swayed by the colder sense of duty, or whether compassion and impulse had any great place in his nature, this fact would resolve the doubt;



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that he once left his bed in the night-time
and descended into the rain to relieve
the distress of some chickens, who had
become separated from their mother.
So open was his heart to the smallest
cry of distress. His perfectly
unconstrained and easy bearing, the
absence of everything stiff or formal
in his manner, which no one could fail
to remark, may testify how little of
art and how much of impulse controlled
his daily life. He ^{thoroughly} ~~thoroughly~~ appreciated
amusements and recreations of no limited
range. In fact it would be hard to
find in any man less of the asceticism
commonly associated with the punton
name. He enjoyed life to the very



end, with the keen relish of a child I know not if he were ever visited in secret with gloomy and despondent moods. But though I have seen him when burdens of care pressed heavily upon him, I never saw a cloud upon him through which his native hopefulness and cheerfulness did not as perceptibly shine, as ~~sun~~ sunshine through a scattering April shower.

These qualities are not rare. Great hearted, generous and impulsive men, if not as "plenty as blackberries," are still by no means scarce. But this is rare; to find a woman, affectionate nature, and a life of transparent simplicity coupled with a high



degree of culture and the most perfect self-command. In the methodic cultivation of the intellect and the schooling of the passions, the emotional side of life must necessarily sink into abeyance for a time. It is only when the culture of the whole nature is carried to a very high pitch of excellence that men can attain again a childlike unconsciousness of self, at the same time that they possess entire control of their faculties.

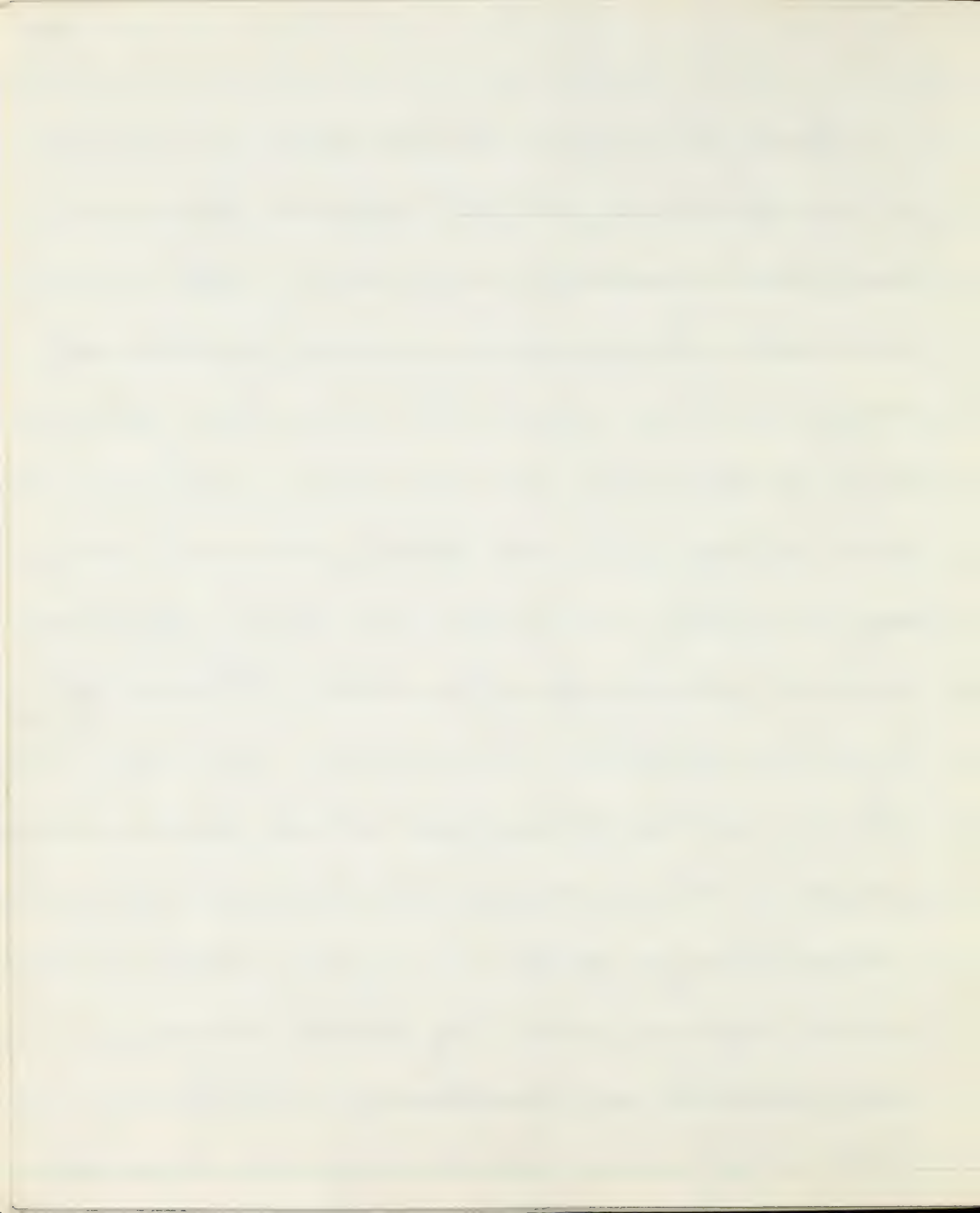
In a refined and quiet way, Judge Wells had all the warmth and spontaneity of soul which delights the typical Western man. But when the latter would be swept off his feet by a gust



of passion, Judge Wells stood calm
 and self possessed. Great presence of
 mind in an emergency was one ^{prominent} ~~feature~~
 characteristic of the man, and in illustration
 of this many ^{anecdotes} ~~anecdotes~~ are related by his
 intimate friends. Whereas untrained
 impulse is tied down to a narrow
 range of enjoyment and performance, he
 had at command a wide extent of
 pleasure, and was fully ^{equipped} ~~equipped~~ for
 an undertaking upon any field of
 thought or action. Such a ^{life} ~~character~~
 is of incomparable value to us, as proof
 that the New England Ideal is the
 highest for which any people have lived,
 and will bear fruit of the very highest
 type of human character.

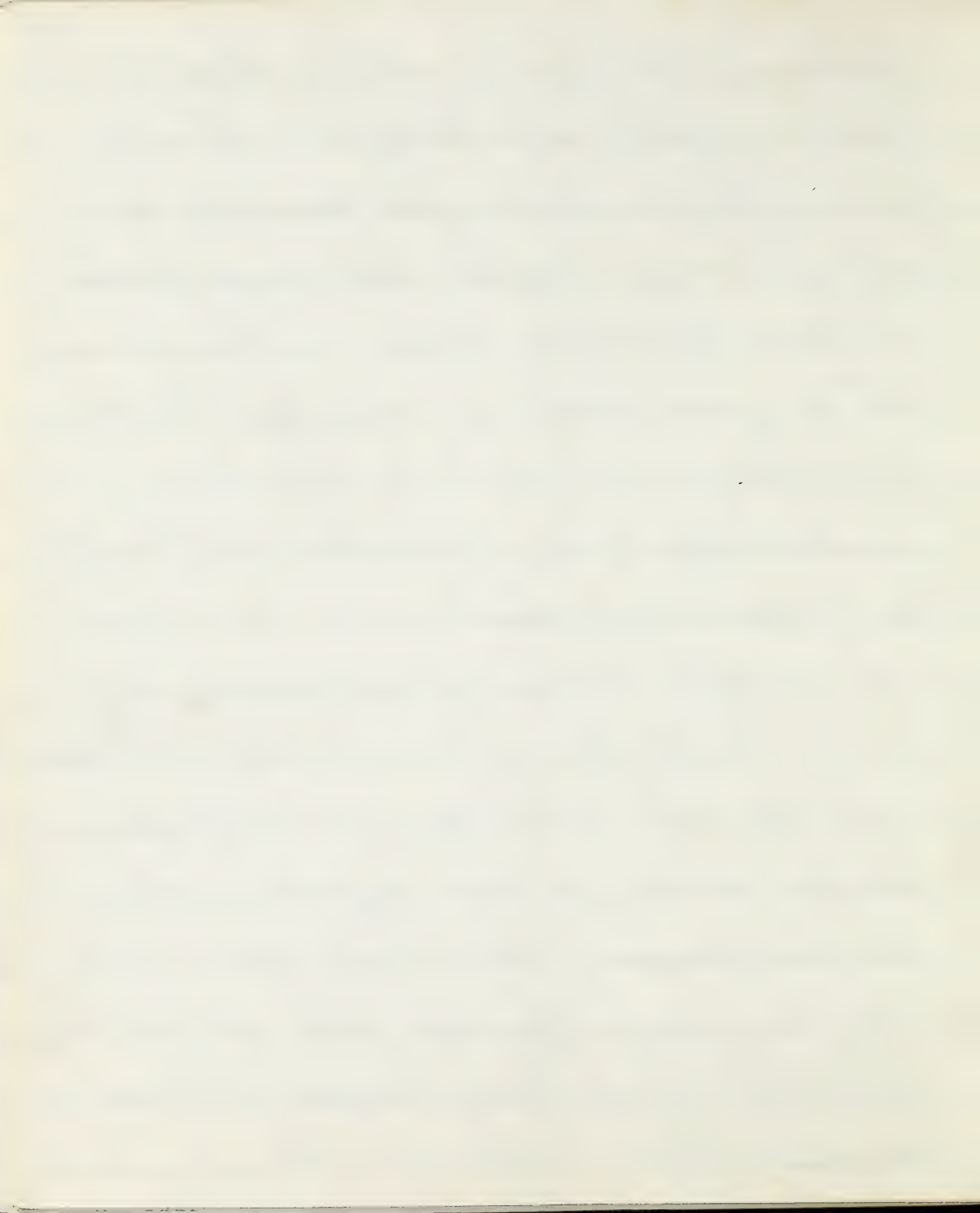


But this same Ideal free men from blind obedience to the social forces and traditions surrounding them. The compelling and stimulating power which our society brings to bear upon the individual - throws him back upon his own life and demands first of all that he shall command himself. - It is not like the Potter molding separate pieces of clay into likeness to a given pattern, but rather like the turning forces of nature which push forward the peculiar development of every living germ. - The representative New England man is, lost among his fellows a creation of the Spirit of the Age, and most truly an original

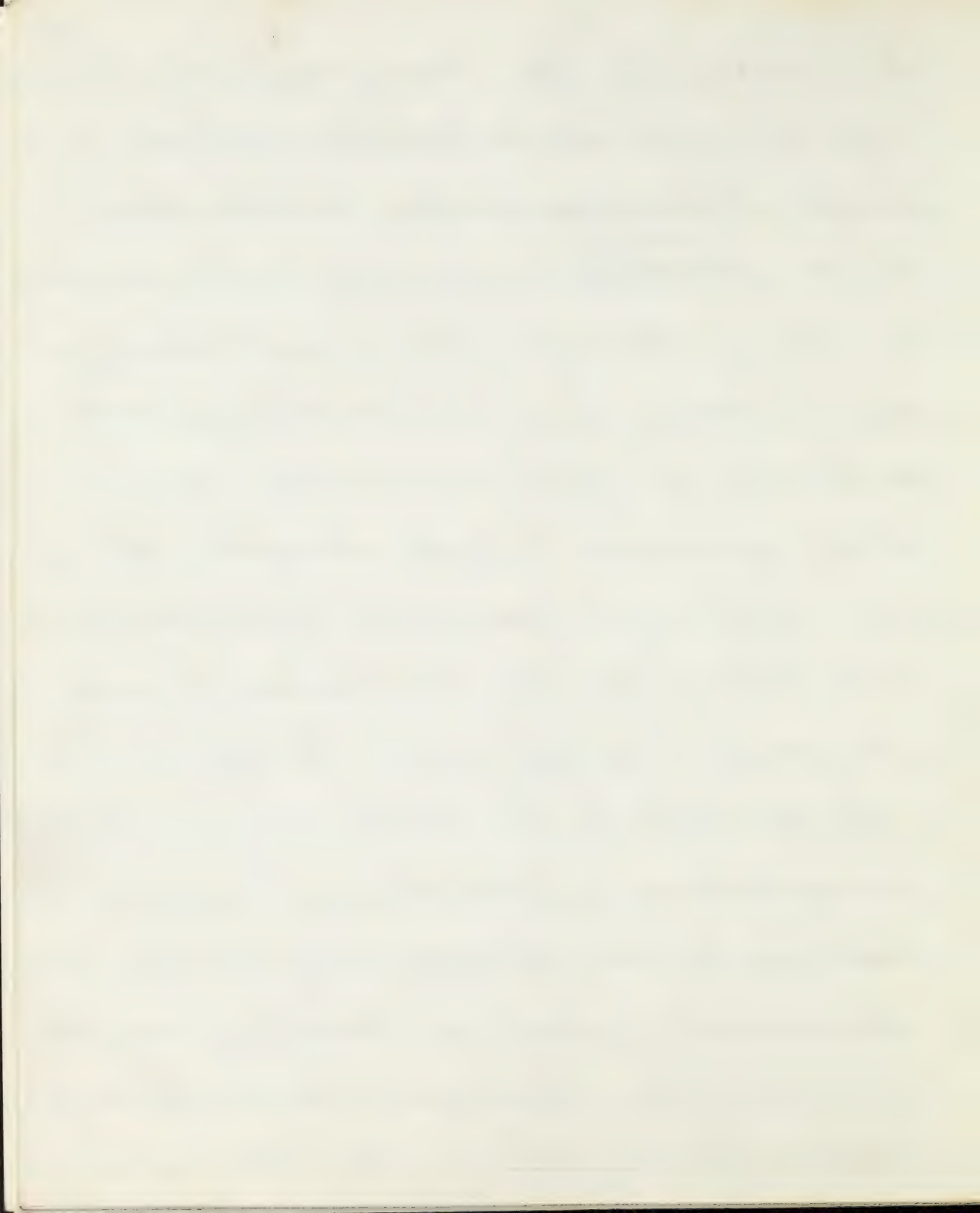


source of that power which shapes public spirit and thought. That in Judge Wells which fits him to stand as an example of the best fruit borne by our Austral tree, marks him out ~~as~~ a great man in himself. In the fact that he possessed a sensitive, sympathetic, yet a perfectly well trained and commandable mind, we shall find the deepest lesson of his life.

Let it be remarked, as proof that we hold the key to that lesson, that Judge Wells exerted a vast influence wherever he was known. It is only that man who commands himself, who can in any particular, or for any length of time command others. In his Church, in



his Town, in the Commonwealth, he
 was felt as an important central
 power toward and after which other
 minds ~~unwillingly~~ ^{willingly} gravitated. It is not
 necessary that a man's name should
 figure largely in the newspapers, ^{or that} ~~or that~~
 he should deluge community with
 talk, in order to give weight to
 his opinion. Indeed it will generally
 hold true that the newspaper heroes
 are mere lay figures. The power
 which compels the tidal wave is not
 heralded by any flourish of trumpets,
 nor does it act through any such
 complicated system of boosting as that
 by which a man gets himself
 elected to Congress. We shall find



that mature thought and character communicating its influence through widening circles of society, as ripples float out from some central disturbance in a sheet of water, will be fraught with more power to quicken social activity than any number of those skating insects which glide so smoothly over its surface. In a quiet, unostentatious way Judge Wells wielded great power, not only in this community, but throughout the State. -

What is the explanation of this fact? By virtue of what quality did his opinion always command respect? What drew to him the many, who from all classes and in all straits of life sought



his counsel? Was it that his Culture and Training fitted him to speak with authority on most practical questions?

Undoubtedly it was this coupled with a Super fact. For his was culture of a certain kind and not mere intellectual proficiency. His whole nature was broadly based upon a moral or religious sense, and this is the pre-eminent fact in the man's life.

His intellect, his affections, ^{and} his desires, while they lacked nothing of power in themselves were always subject to his feeling of Duty. The degree in which Conscience found expression through whatever he said or did, ^{gave} ~~made~~ him a very ^{rare and} remarkable manhood.



Though in a purely intellectual estimate he would not appear great above many eminent men in his profession, still in talking with him one was surprised again and again to find how wide and deep - how far outside of more traditional channels his thinking had extended; and being possessed of an original sense of right and wrong, it gave him something of an intuitive perceptive power, which emancipated his judgement from blind obedience to precedent and made it often of rare value.

His reasoning faculties were of a kind so fine and compact, and withal so firmly grounded upon his



religious faith, that many a famous
logician - break in his empty shell, ^{it}
would appear small in comparison

Perhaps the strength of his ^{moral} ~~religious~~
life and its influence upon his
character may be best illustrated by
the entire genuineness and integrity
of his whole nature. "No man," says
that bit of worldly wisdom, "is a
hero to his own valer"; which is
another way of saying that every
great reputation is a painted show
like the canvass palace of the stage,
whose artificial nature is fully
revealed to those behind the scenes.

Now undoubtedly the painted imitations
are more numerous than solid realities.



But notwithstanding the skepticism of an actor who had seen only theatrical royalty, we should know that there are real Kings and princely mansions, or the imitations never would have had existence. So, despite the bubble reputations blown by skillful conjurers, we ought to know that some true greatness walks this earth, or there were nothing for Demagogues to copy.

There are men in whose lives there is no "behind the scenes"; Heroes who are most heroic to those who know them best, even as the rich treasures of a Palace are best known to its familiar inmates. There are characters which need no artificial



light to conceal their ~~too~~ tawdry
 magnificence, but bear the closest
 inspection in the broad blaze of open
 day. Such an one was Judge Wells.
 One might safely challenge any
 person to say that a closer acquaintance
 with him ever resulted in disappoint-
 ment. No one ever penetrated behind
 an appearance in his life to find
 emptiness and unreality. The man
 who "assumes a virtue when he
 has it not" - trusts not in virtue,
 but in his own cunning. The
 man who makes it his business to
 be what he would seem knows that
 nothing worth possessing is to be
 secured by a Knavish trick.



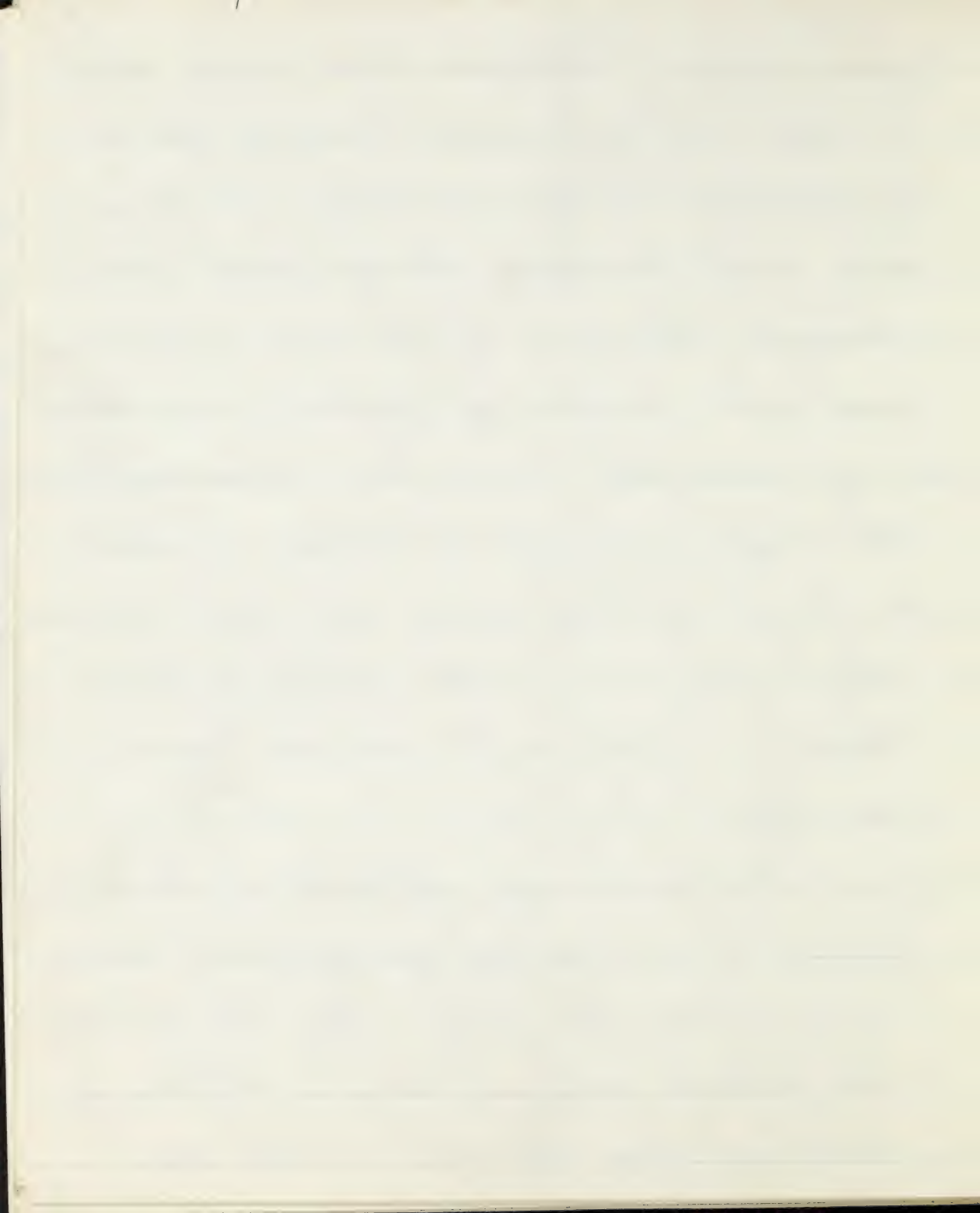
most
~~many~~ people reveal weaknesses to
 their intimate friends of which the
 world does not suspect them. But I
 am prepared to say that from his earliest
^{this} ~~most~~ ^{own} years, ~~reposed~~ ^{reposed} no more faults to those
 immediately about him than to the
 eye of society. The manhood of
 Judge Wells was genuine at every
 point, - how thoroughly real and
 massive in its strength, it needed
 something more than business
 acquaintance with him to appreciate.

This is more than a hint, it
 is an open declaration that his faith
 in God and the Right was unquestioning
 and complete, - the corner stone of
 his character and the support of his

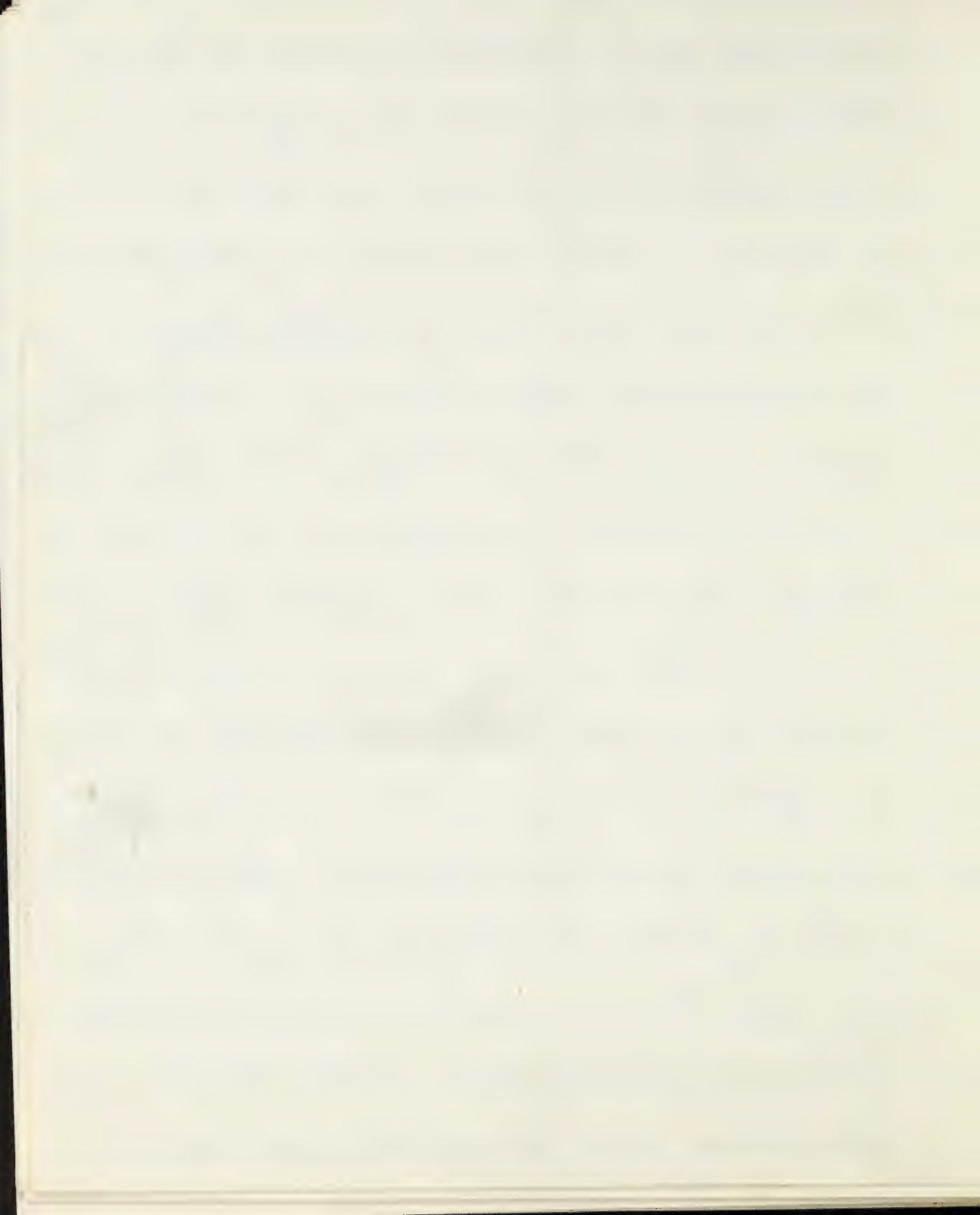


fair name. Religion was with him a life and no mere mass of forms and rules. It proved itself in him, as a vital religion always will, the strongest element of human nature and the source of power over others. His Self command was the command of that higher self which allies us with the Spirit of God, over the lower nature which joins us to the world of finite things. Thus so I read the lesson of his life.

The influence of such a man flows wide among his fellows, nor need we hesitate to say that it makes the deepest impress man is capable of making upon his age. In this

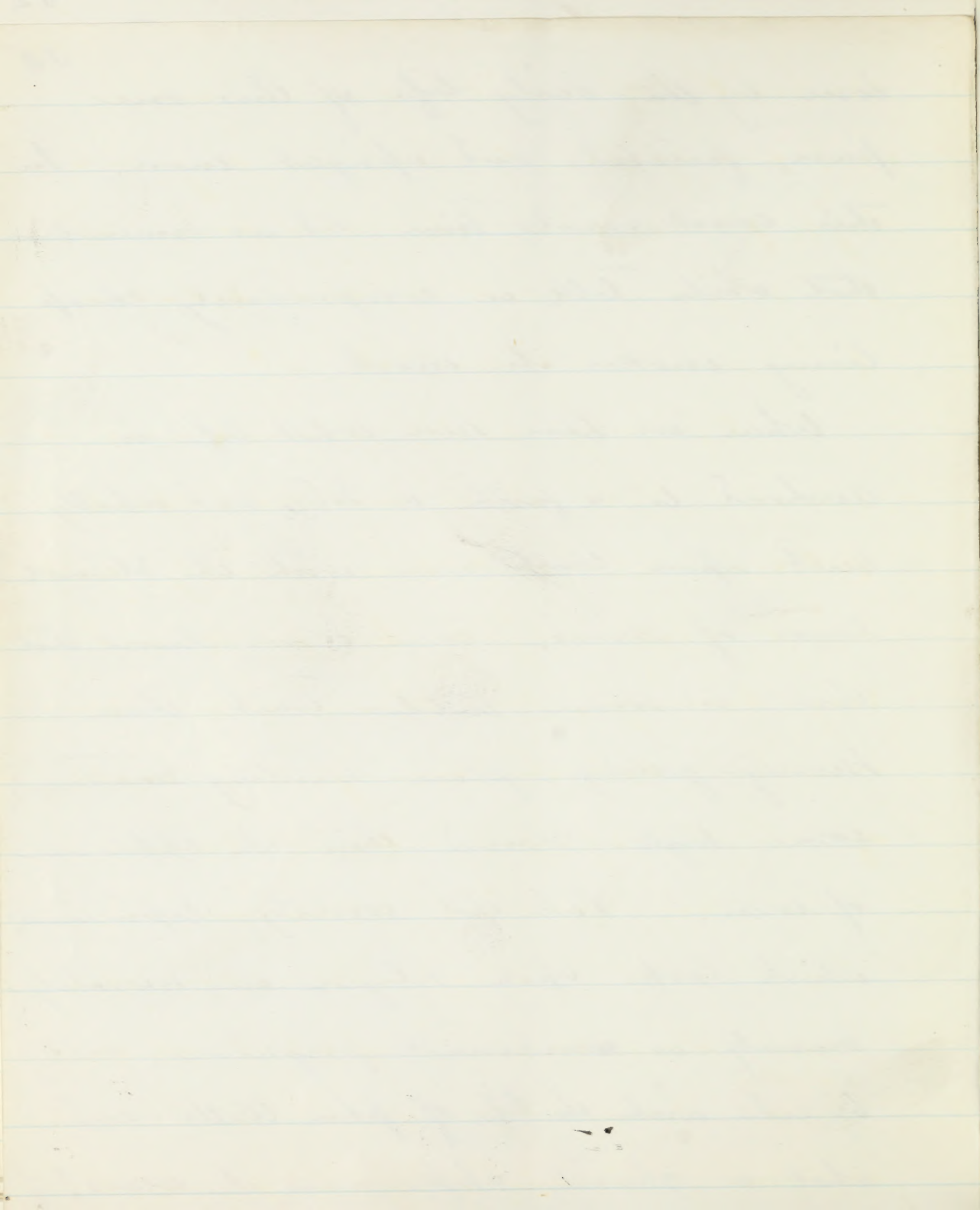


literary era we have come to think that about the only way of leaving any influence behind us is to write a book. But the man who of all the world has been for these eighteen hundred years most felt in human affairs, left behind him not one written word. Why can we not learn that what we inscribe upon the souls with which we come in contact is the clearest, most enduring record we can make! We may any of us give ourselves up to the task of setting forth in language the beauty of righteousness, and we shall not so much lift men above the tricks of policy and expediency, as has been



done by the daily life of this one
 pure, faithful and upright man. In
 this most vocal time let us remember
 that while talk is comparatively cheap,
 living makes its mark.

When we have seen what life is
 anchored to a faith in God, and wholly
 bent upon compliance with the eternal
 laws of mind, then do we know that
 there is some nobler trait than
 money-getting, place-hunting smartness,
 some higher reward than the applause
 of men. But that worldly skepticism,
 which looks upon religion and morality
 mainly as convenient prejudices, side
 by side with the life of John Wells - and
 what a ghastly appearance it wears!



Contrast the scintillating genius which now and again thrusts its way into high places with the calm poise of his religious soul - and what a transparent show it is!

Practical
Of Judge Wells' relations with the Thursday Club it is needless to speak. All who ever met him socially will recall with delight his frank and easy bearing, the charm of his conversation and the ever failing supply of kindly sympathy which beamed from his expressive countenance.

Let it suffice to say that upon our record stands no name of which we have ^{greater} ~~greater~~ cause to be proud, none more intimately associated with pleasant,

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